

IX.—*Notices of Recent Ornithological Publications.*

1. ENGLISH.

MR. TRISTRAM'S ready pen is so well known to, and so highly appreciated by, all our readers, that to them we are sure a work from it requires no recommendation from us. But we must call attention to the narrative of his last campaign in Palestine, which has been recently published*. We can honestly say that it is the most agreeable book of travels we have read for a very long time. The constant recurrence in it of observations on natural history makes the work doubly interesting, while the value of the abundant information it contains is increased by the author's singularly pleasing and unaffected style of conveying it. Large as the volume is, there is absolutely not a single dull page in it. We are not surprised to hear that a second edition of the 'Land of Israel' has been already called for, and this will probably have appeared by the time the present notice meets the eyes of our readers. We only wish Mr. Tristram's great literary success in this undertaking might lead to the publication of his Algerian Journals of 1856 and 1857. Their chief ornithological features have, it is true, been already laid before the public, by himself and Mr. Osbert Salvin, in the former series of 'The Ibis;' but that series of papers sadly requires a connecting narrative, such as would be afforded by the sequel to 'The Great Sahara,' which we were once led to expect, and now our hopes on the subject are again revived.

The distinguished German professor who was employed, some twenty years ago, by the Ray Society to report on the progress of ornithology, considered that the publication of such works as those upon which Mr. Gould has hitherto been engaged would ultimately injure the science they professed to advance, and he deliberately proposed that their existence should be completely ignored. Should this gentleman be still in the land of the living, as we certainly trust he may be, it must be some

* The Land of Israel; a Journal of Travels in Palestine, undertaken with special reference to its physical character. By H. B. TRISTRAM, M.A., F.L.S., &c. London: 1865 (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge). 8vo, pp. 652.

gratification to him to learn that Mr. Gould has produced a book which is not specially designed for the amusement of *dilettanti*, but, on the contrary, is intended to be of real service to the working ornithologist. The 'Handbook to the Birds of Australia',*, the publication of which we announced some months ago (*Ibis*, 1865, p. 239), has recently appeared; and we do not hesitate to declare that it is one of the most useful as well as one of the most important works on ornithology that has seen the light during the past year. It is most useful, since the bulk, to say nothing of the expense, of his previous labour on the same subject, the magnificent 'Birds of Australia,' places it out of the reach of most private persons; and it is most important, because this very facility of using it is sure to give a powerful impulse to the study of ornithology among the flourishing communities who inhabit the southern outliers of the British empire.

To review this book would be impossible for us at present; but, should time and space allow, we will return to its further consideration. Mr. Gould has, as it seems to us, very fairly fulfilled our words of promise to which we have but just referred. We owe him our thanks, especially for carrying out rigidly the law of priority in nomenclature; and herein he sets a good example to many of our cotemporaries; for he is quite willing to disregard names conferred even by himself when convinced that they are but synonyms of those previously applied to the same species by other writers. We must, however, state that in some respects Mr. Gould fails to meet the requirements of science at the present day. In the work we are noticing he creates a not inconsiderable number of new genera, and this without defining their limits. The mania for genus-making, now unfortunately so prevalent, appears to us, more likely than anything else, to put a check upon future biological investigations. But hitherto we believe that the worst offenders in this respect have usually been accustomed to give some rational definition of the new groups they propose to establish. Our author, we

* Handbook to the Birds of Australia. By JOHN GOULD, F.R.S., &c. London: published by the author, 26 Charlotte Street, Bedford Square. 1865. 2 vols. Royal 8vo.

are sorry to say, sometimes neglects this very necessary precaution. In his first volume we have the names *Melanodryas*, *Pæcilodryas*, and *Stigmatops* proposed and used without any further indication of generic characters than the reader can himself gather from his own knowledge of the species assigned to them. We are quite ready to admit that generic division is a mere matter of convenience; but in order that it may be so, it is, and has always been regarded as, absolutely essential that such divisions should be defined. The cases we have cited are bad enough; but we cannot even allow that the good old classical rule is obeyed in the following paragraph from the second volume, which is apparently intended as the definition of a new genus, *Ptistes*:—

“The birds for which I propose the above generic appellation are, in my opinion, sufficiently different in form and colouring to warrant their being separated from *Aprosmictus*, and formed into a new genus. At present three species are known to me. * * * They have a very laboured flight, consequent on the great size of their wings, which has suggested the generic name of *Ptistes*, i. e. winnower.”

It is with extreme regret that we make these depreciatory remarks; but the interest of our science seems to call for some such protest. After all, the imperfections of which we have spoken are but slight drawbacks to the practical utility of this ‘Handbook,’ and they may be easily remedied in a second edition, which, unless we greatly overrate the ornithological yearnings of the “Corn-stalks,” we venture to predict will be soon called for.

In some “Notes on the Chatham Islands,” by Mr. H. H. Travers, published in the ‘Journal of the Linnean Society,’ a short account of the ornithology of those islands is given, which we here reproduce, seeing that, as it is included in the Botanical division of the Society’s publication, it might otherwise escape our readers’ attention.

“There are at present but few land-birds either on this [Chatham’s] or on Pitt’s Island. Formerly the White Crane (*Herodias flavirostris*), the Bittern (*Botaurus melanotus*), an

Apteryx said by the Maories to have been identical with a New Zealand species, and also, according to their accounts, a smaller species of the same bird (though I believe this to be the *Rallus dieffenbachi*), the Weka (*Ocydromus australis*), and the Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*) were found on both islands, but have become extinct since their invasion by the New Zealanders [in 1832 or 1835]. Mr. Hunt informed me that the last time he had seen the Bittern was about three years ago. The land-birds now found are a large Falcon, the Pigeon, the Tui or Parson-bird, the Pukeko (*Porphyrio melanotus*), the Parrakeet (*Platycercus novæ-zealandiæ*), the Fantail, the Pihoihoi or Lark, and a small Titmouse, all identical with birds of the same species found in New Zealand. I was told by Mr. Hunt that the Pigeon was first seen on the islands within the last eight years, and that the Titmouse appeared shortly after the occurrence of the great fire in Australia, known as the 'Black Thursday Fire.' Mr. Hunt is a very careful and trustworthy person; and as his statement relative to the Pigeon was confirmed by the Maories, I have full reason for believing what he told me, in regard to both birds, to be true. Of aquatic birds, I saw the Grey Duck, the Brown Teal, and two species of Shag common in New Zealand, and a large number of Gulls and other sea-birds similar to those which frequent the coasts of that country. Mutton-birds were extraordinarily numerous on a rock known as the Fort, lying between Chatham and Pitt's Islands. During my journey round Chatham Island, of which I have given you an account above, I saw a peculiar Teal on one of the lagoons near the Red Bluff. This bird had bright scarlet markings on the wings. I fired at it; but, owing to the great dampness of the weather, the gun I had with me hung fire, and I missed the bird. I never saw another specimen, and was informed that it was very uncommon. The number of land-birds of all kinds, however, is extremely limited; indeed it is rare to meet with any at all during a whole day's walk in the bush. I attribute their destruction principally to wild cats, the progeny of imported animals, although I was informed that a species of Gull or Sea-Hawk also attacks the land-birds, and is especially destructive to poultry."

It would be very desirable, if possible, to ascertain precisely

the species of flightless birds, such as *Apteryx*, *Strigops*, and *Ocydromus*, which were formerly found on these islands, as the question is naturally a most interesting one.

2. GERMAN.

Herr August von Pelzeln has been good enough to forward us a copy of his work on the Ornithology of the Voyage of the 'Novara' round the world in the years 1857-59*. The principal portion of the ornithological objects were collected by Herr Zelebor, who was among the men of science forming the Expedition; but various and not inconsiderable additions were also made by other naturalists, among whose names we are gratified to see Mr. Swinhoe's. We are left to infer the route taken by the 'Novara;' but this appears to have been from Europe to Rio de Janeiro, touching at Madeira, thence to the Cape of Good Hope, and so on to St. Paul's Island; after that to Ceylon, the Nicobar Islands, Malay archipelago, and the Coast of China; then the Marian and Caroline Islands (Puynipet) to Australia and New Zealand; then across the Pacific, visiting the Society Islands, Pitcairn, Mitchell's Islands, and Juan Fernandez, to Valparaiso, and so home by way of Cape Horn. In the introduction, Herr von Pelzeln suggests the propriety of forming the ocean south of the tropic of Capricorn into a new zoological region, in addition to those proposed in the well-known geographical classification of Mr. P. L. Sclater. The arguments adduced, however, in favour of this course are not, we think, sufficiently convincing, being founded chiefly on the fact of the very peculiar genus *Chionis*, and the yellow-hooded species of *Eudyptes* being confined within those limits. The author's remarks on the variations in the plumage of many members of the *Falconidæ*, and on the geographical distribution of *Accipitres*, deserve attention. As species now for the first time publicly described, we have *Micrastur macrorhynchus* from Brazil—a discovery of Natterer's! (on which Herr von Pelzeln takes occasion to describe minutely the allied species *M. concentricus* and *M. gilvicollis*), *Gerygone auck-*

* Reise der österreichischen Fregatte Novara um die Erde in den Jahren 1857, 1858, 1859. Zoologischer Theil. Erster Band Vögel von AUGUST VON PELZELN. Wien: 1865. 4to, pp. 176, tabb. 6.

landica from New Zealand, *Mecistura swinhoii* from Shanghai, *Volvocivora schierbrandi* from Borneo, *Carpophaga frauenfeldi* from Stewart Island, and *Aramides zelebori* from Brazil. An interesting fact ascertained by the Novara Expedition is the true locality of the beautiful *Chalcopsitta rubiginosa*, which turns out to be the island of Puynipet, one of the Caroline group, a little to the north of New Guinea. We hardly know whether this bird is to be accounted one of the "Crimson" Lories; but if so, Mr. Wallace will have to enlarge the borders of the area he assigned to them.

'The Birds of Cilli' are treated of in a paper contributed by Herr Eduard Seidensacher to the Natural-Science Union of Steiermark (Styria) in 1864*. Two hundred and four species (to which two others are added in manuscript, in the separately printed copy with which the author has favoured us) are enumerated as occurring in the district. None of them are of any remarkable rarity; but the notes appended seem to be carefully drawn up, and the whole article contains much useful information respecting this (ornithologically speaking) little-known region. *Strix uralensis* is supposed by Herr Seidensacher to breed in Styria, though he has not hitherto been able to ascertain the fact positively.

3. DUTCH.

A treatise on the Episternal Apparatus of Birds has been contributed by Heer P. Harting to the publications of the Utrecht Society of Arts and Sciences †. We are aware that the word *episternum* has been used by writers in several senses; that attached to it by our author seems to show, if we understand him rightly, that he means to comprehend under the designation of "episternal apparatus" all the membranous appendages which connect the coracoids and furcula with the sternum, and which are

* Die Vögel von Cilli. Separat-Abdruck aus den Mittheilungen des naturwissenschaftlichen Verein für Steiermark. Heft ii. 1864.

† L'appareil épisternal des Oiseaux. Natuurkundige Verhandelingen uitgegeven door het provinciaal Utrechtsch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen. Nieuwe Reeks. Eerste Deel, derde stuk. Utrecht: 1864. (London, Williams and Norgate.)

only occasionally (that is, in some particular groups or species) ossified, even in adult birds. A plate containing seventeen figures accompanies the paper, and we must especially recommend to our readers' notice the beautiful execution of them. They quite put to shame any osteological figures we have lately seen produced in this country; and it is only fair that we should mention that the artist's name is P. W. van der Weyer of Utrecht. A singular mistake, however, is made in one point: "Fig. 15" represents, and that very accurately, the anterior portion of the sternum of *Grus cinerea*—not *Cygnus musicus*, as stated in the article (page 16) and in the explanation of the plate.

Professor Schlegel's monograph of the Kingfishers of the Dutch Indies* is a meritorious work. The text is, unfortunately, though naturally, in Dutch; but a "Revue Synoptique" in French of the species mentioned is added. This is in a great measure taken from the author's catalogue of *Alcedines* in the Leyden Museum, already noticed in 'The Ibis' (1864, pp. 124, 125). ✓ An important feature of the book is the profuseness of its illustrations. Of the nine and thirty species of *Alcedinidæ* which, according to Prof. Schlegel's computation, are found in the eastern possessions of the King of the Netherlands, all but two are figured, and some of them six or seven times,—though it must be remembered that the "species" to which this honour is accorded are, in the estimation of most ornithologists, capable and deserving of differentiation far more than our author will allow—as, for instance, *Tanysiptera dea*, which is made to include at least four other forms which have been characterized as separate species.

We cannot understand why there is so little in common between English naturalists and the English public. It scarcely ever happens that a professedly popular work on natural history, published in this country, is not full of blunders more or less ridiculous, the reason being of course that the author is not equal

* De Vogels van Nederlandsch Indië, beschreven en afgebeeld door H. SCHLEGEL. Haarlem: 1864. 4to.

to the due performance of his task. They seem to manage things better abroad. One popular work, by an ornithologist of the very first rank, has been noticed over and over again in this Journal. We have now to mention another and more ambitious attempt*, equally well carried on, by an equally able naturalist, in the work whose title we transcribe below. Ostensibly a description of the vivarium of the flourishing Zoological Society at Amsterdam, the 'Dierentuin' contains a very good general history of the class *Aves*, embellished with fair engravings representing, if we are not mistaken, some species of birds which have not hitherto been figured. A book-maker in want of a subject might do much worse than translate this work, and might make arrangements with the brothers Van Es for the use of the woodcuts, so as to bring the whole out in England.

4. RUSSIAN.

We have at last been able to examine the work in which Herr Radde has recorded the results of his travels in Siberia†, and a very valuable volume it is. Here we must content ourselves with the briefest notice of it, as to do justice to it would indeed require a review of much greater length than we could afford space for. The book is indispensable to all who busy themselves with the ornithology of any parts of Europe and Asia; and since it has formed the subject of an article in a recent number of the 'Natural History Review,' in which article we trace the pen of the greatest master of the subject of ornithological distribution, we are the less concerned at not being able to say as much of Herr Radde's labours as we should have wished. Two new species are described in the work,—(1) *Sylvia (Phyllopneuste) schwarzi*, which, judging from the figure, appears to us to be rather a *Locustella*; and (2) *Anas (Fuligula) baeri*, which seems to be a hybrid—a possibility suggested indeed, though controverted, by the author (p. 376). The plate represents this last

* De Dierentuin, van het Koninklijk Zoologisch Genootschap *Natura Artis Magistra* te Amsterdam. De Vogels. Gescherst door Prof. H. SCHLEGEL. Amsterdam. 4to.

† Reisen im Süden von Ost-Sibirien in den Jahren 1855–1859. Von GUSTAV RADDE. Band ii. Die Festlands-Ornis des südöstlichen Sibiriens. St. Petersburg: 1863. 4to.

supposed species as a bird very similar in colour to the hybrid which has been variously denominated *Fuligula homeyeri* or *F. ferinoides*, except that it has the head of a dark brownish-black colour, glossed with green—a character which would lead us to suspect that *F. marila* and *F. cristata* are accountable for its origin. Another noteworthy fact mentioned by Herr Radde is, that specimens of *Falco vespertinus* from Eastern Siberia, have the under surface of the wings either entirely white or white barred with grey, instead of the uniform deep tint which is found in European examples. The former are distinguished by our author as “var. *amurensis*”*. We must also take occasion to remark that Herr Radde, who has certainly enjoyed preeminent opportunities for observation, declares (p. 292) that *Syrnhaptes paradoxus* lays four instead of three eggs. This statement is in confirmation of that of M. Delanoue, but opposed to the testimony of Prof. Reinhardt (cf. ‘Ibis,’ 1864, p. 196), as well as to what might be supposed, by analogy from the prevalent practice in other *Pteroclidæ*, to be the habit in *Syrnhaptes*. ✓

238

5. AMERICAN.

‘The Journal of Proceedings of the Philadelphia Academy’ for last June contains a paper by Mr. Lawrence, which, though not a long one, demands a somewhat detailed notice here. The species (four in number) characterized as new have all been previously mentioned in that gentleman’s lists of the Birds of Panama, published in the ‘Annals of the New York Lyceum,’ but have been mentioned under other names. *Tachyphonus rubrifrons* is apparently distinct from *T. xanthopygius*, to which Mr. Lawrence formerly referred it. *Anthus parvus* is now separated from what the author considers to be *A. rufus* of Gmelin, from Bahia; but having regard to what Professor Baird has recently said in his ‘Review of the Birds of North America’ as to our confused knowledge of the South American Titlarks, we cannot help feeling that the difficulty in making them out is hardly decreased by this addition to the number of described species.

Mr. Lawrence is at some pains to show that *Thamnophilus nigricristatus* differs from *T. affinis*, Cab. and Heine (Mus. Hein.

* We hear that Mr. Gurney has received this variety from Natal!

1868

41

ii. p. 17), the Central American form of *T. doliatus*. In this he is doubtless correct; but does the supposed new bird differ from *T. radiatus*, Vieillot? Mr. Sclater has given (Edinb. Phil. Journ., N. S., i. p. 236, and P. Z. S. 1858, p. 218) concise diagnoses whereby *T. radiatus* may be distinguished from *T. doliatus*, referring especially to the black crest, the narrower and better-defined black bands on the breast, and the like. These are points of distinction between *T. nigricristatus* and *T. affinis*. The females, too, differ in the same respects from *T. doliatus* and *T. affinis*, of which last species surely Mr. Lawrence describes a young male when he refers to the wing-coverts being "brownish-black, barred and tipped with rufous, and the smaller quills barred and spotted with black," and as having faint indications of narrow bars on the upper plumage (p. 108). We, of course, have not seen Mr. Lawrence's specimens; but we believe that the adult female *T. affinis* is destitute of all such marks, and suspect that *T. nigricristatus* will prove to be identical with *T. radiatus*.

The young males of *T. radiatus* and *T. affinis* would be difficult to distinguish, and very possibly Messrs. Sclater and Salvin were wrong in referring one of their specimens to the latter; for Mr. Salvin informs us that the example in question has some white in the crest, though much less than any individual of *T. affinis* that he possesses. We are therefore inclined to think that there exists in the Isthmus but one species—namely, *T. radiatus*, to which we have shown that *T. nigricristatus* must be very closely allied, if at all separable from it, while the first specimens received thence by Mr. Lawrence, and called by him *T. doliatus*, are, he now says, *T. radiatus*; and Mr. Salvin confesses that the bird he called *T. affinis* (P. Z. S. 1864, p. 355) is most likely after all the same species, the range of which on the South American continent is extensive, skirting the Andes from Bolivia to Panama. Its presence as sole occupier of the Isthmus, and separating the northern from the southern forms of *T. doliatus*, is of some significance when considering the barriers to their geographical distribution.

Geotrygon albiventer is the fourth of Mr. Lawrence's new species. The close proximity of Panama to Chiriqui makes us

suspect it may ultimately prove identical with *G. chiriquensis*, though there are discrepancies in the descriptions. Still, when such delicate bronze-colours have to be spoken of, it is hardly likely that two writers should call the same tint by the same name. The Chiriqui bird is somewhat larger (wings 5·9 inches instead of 5·5 inches); but not having specimens of either before us, we cannot decide the point.

In the 'Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History' (vol. ix. pp. 368, 369), our friend Dr. Bryant describes, under the name of *littoralis*, a new variety of *Parus hudsonicus* from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and has some "Remarks on the genus *Galeoscoptes* of Cabanis," from which he proposes to remove *Turdus rubripes* of Temminck and *Turdus plumbeus* of Linnæus, raising, for the benefit of the former, Mr. Sclater's subgenus *Mimocichla* into a genus, and relegating the latter to a new genus, which he calls "*Mimokitta*," or, as we should prefer to write it, *Mimocitta*. Dr. Bryant gives a very detailed account of the peculiarities of these genera, as well as a description of the *Mimocitta plumbea*, which, except by Catesby, he says has never before been accurately done.

X.—Letters, Announcements, &c.

The following letters, addressed "To the Editor of 'The Ibis,'" have been received:—

Takow, Formosa, 1 July, 1865.

SIR,—My report for last month need not be a long one. Early in June a photographer from Amoy, Mr. Edwards, returned from a visit to the neighbouring mountains with some photographs of the Kalee savages, which I have forwarded to the Geographical Society. He also brought a skin of *Urocissa cærulea*. This, which he informed me was a common species, is identical with the bird of the Tamsuy vicinity. * * * At the commencement of the month both *Dicrurus macrocerus* and *Zosterops simplex* had young ones flying about. Most birds here breed twice in the year, some few three times; Kites, however, only once; but more of this hereafter.